

2017: The Year in Review and A Look Ahead

Congressman Fred Upton

115th Congress | First Session



A note from Congressman Fred Upton on the priorities for 2018

2017 was a transformational year for American politics as we saw a new president sworn in. However, much stayed the same. For me, my focus never wavered on local initiatives such as helping constituents with problems big and small, and on bipartisan policies that create jobs and improve our economy. In all of these areas, we saw legislative wins.

As we look ahead to 2018, we must continue our work on advancing an agenda that focuses on items folks in Michigan care about most. We have our work cut out for us. But I believe that by working together – Republicans and Democrats – we can and we will solve many of the pressing issues before us.

In this report you will find detailed policy insights into what we accomplished in the past year on a host of topics: leadership and results for Southwest Michigan, jobs and the economy, 21st Century Cures and health care, national security, the Great Lakes, pro-growth tax reform, the opioids epidemic, immigration, energy, and education.

My hope is that this report will provide insight into some of our major accomplishments from 2017 and show the strong foundation for what we hope to achieve in the coming year. The New Year will certainly provide new challenges, which we will face together.

As always, please know that staff in my constituent offices in Kalamazoo (269-385-0039) and Benton Harbor/St. Joseph, (269-982-1986) as well as my office in Washington, D.C., (202-225-3761), are happy to help assist with any issues or concerns as we move forward through 2018.

Leadership and Results for Southwest Michigan

It's an honor to represent a diverse section of our state that stretches from the shores of Lake Michigan to the eastern edge of Kalamazoo County. I remain ever-committed to working with our local stakeholders to promote common-sense legislative solutions that deliver real results for our corner of the state. This year alone I held 493 in-person meetings and events with constituents and my office was able to assist more than 1,275 constituents with casework issues and cutting through bureaucratic red tape. In 2018, this focus on helping those here in Southwest Michigan with problems big and small will continue.

Upton helped South Haven hero James C. McCloughan receive the [Medal of Honor](#), surprised a Niles World War II veteran with replacement [service medals](#), and honored a St. Joseph Gulf War veteran with [overdue](#) service medals. Upton also focused on ensuring [funding](#) for St. Joseph Harbor dredging, requested assistance from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to deal with [severe erosion](#) in New Buffalo, kept moving forward on the Allied Paper/Kalamazoo River [Superfund](#) cleanup, made progress in stopping the erosion of the [St. Joseph bluff](#), applauded the decision to keep [Palisades](#) Nuclear Power Plant open and operational until 2022, welcomed a new [Congressional Art Competition](#) winner, and introduced, once again, legislation for the benefit of [Ibrahim Parlak](#).

Upton was also proud to take part in numerous local meetings and events such as the visiting the [Vicksburg mill](#) revitalization project, meeting with faith leaders in [Benton Harbor](#) and at the [Kalamazoo Islamic Center](#), hearing from local restaurant owners in [Portage](#), helping open the new Borgess Behavioral Crisis Center in [Kalamazoo](#), helping break ground at the new \$52 million Exchange Building project in [Kalamazoo](#) and the Stryker facility in [Portage](#), speaking at a vigil to honor the [lives lost and the survivors](#) of the Kalamazoo shooting, meeting with the [St. Joseph High School](#) FIRST Robotics team, and [much more](#).

Jobs and our Michigan Economy

During the past several years Michigan's economic situation has greatly improved. However, there is still much work to be done. That is why a focus on jobs and Michigan economic development remains a top focus for me and my staff. In 2018, ensuring our region has a seat at the national table, promoting job creation, and economic growth will continue to be a top priority.

Upton introduced bipartisan legislation to help Michigan's automakers, the *Fuel Economy Harmonization Act*, that would help keep automobiles affordable for all Americans, voted to improve [job training](#) opportunities for Southwest Michigan students, pitched [Foxconn](#) on Southwest Michigan, co-sponsored the [Save Local Business Act](#), and was behind the wheel for bipartisan [self-driving car](#) legislation. The Energy and Commerce Committee advanced legislation to modernize the [nation's water infrastructure](#) on the heels of the Flint Water Crisis and Upton supported Michigan jobs by pushing for the [full withdrawal](#) of the Environmental Protection Agency's Waters of the United States (WOTUS) rule, and sponsoring bipartisan [Soo Locks](#) legislation that would create Michigan jobs and keep our economy strong.

Upton was proud to take part in local meetings and events to talk about the economy and jobs such as discussing community partnerships with [Pfizer](#) employees, participating in a [Facebook Live](#) event to discuss growing small business opportunities in Southwest Michigan, hosting a small business crawl in [downtown Kalamazoo](#), and more.

21st Century Cures & Health Care

21st Century Cures was a prime example of how important legislation should be passed: Through an open and transparent process with constant consultation with stakeholders, hearings featuring expert witnesses, drafting and re-drafting, and a spirit of collegiality, compromise, and bipartisanship. This year saw the one-year anniversary of this landmark legislation being signed into law. We reflected on how far we have come, but the anniversary was also a reminder that we have much work left to do. Patients and their families are counting on us. The health care debate was also dominating by the future of Obamacare. After the U.S. Senate failed to act, we at the Problem Solvers Caucus are working on a bipartisan way out of the quagmire. In 2018, we must forge a bipartisan path to ensure all Americans have access to quality, affordable health care.

One of the biggest wins of 2017 came as [FDA Reauthorization Act](#) was signed into law. This bipartisan legislation, championed by Upton, will improve the public health as well as protect thousands of Southwest Michigan jobs. Upton supported the reauthorization of the critical Children's Health Insurance Program ([CHIP](#)). He also praised the decision to [retain](#) National Institutes of Health (NIH) Director Francis Collins, introduced bipartisan legislation to improve [cancer care](#), co-sponsored legislation to protect patients with [pre-existing conditions](#), introduced legislation to [strengthen Medicaid](#), and joined U.S. Rep. Diana DeGette, D-Colorado, in urging the Administration to rethink proposed [NIH budget cuts](#).

Upton was proud to take part in local meetings and events surrounding health care issues such as helping celebrate the naming of the [Moses L. Walker](#) Building at the Family Health Center, touring the newly constructed Cassopolis [Family Clinic](#), visiting the Center for Immunobiology at the Western Michigan University Home Stryker M.D. [School of Medicine](#), meeting with patients, caregivers, and clinicians at the [ALS Clinic](#) in the Bronson Health Neuroscience Center in Kalamazoo, and hosting thoughtful discussions on [health care issues](#) with pro-Obamacare advocates in St. Joseph and Kalamazoo. Upton also received the [Marian B. & Jacob K. Javits Foundation "Celebration of Bipartisan Leadership" award](#) alongside U.S. Rep. Diana DeGette for their work on 21st Century Cures.

National Security

We live in an era of threats from both rogue nations and evil terrorist organizations alike. National security is an issue when we are always better served working together with one common purpose: Securing our nation from these threats, preparing for future threats, and ensuring those who have risked their lives in defense of this great nation are properly cared for. In 2018, we must remain vigilant about the threats we face and work together to improve our national security for the benefit of all Americans.

Upton supported the *Fiscal Year 2018 National Defense Authorization Act* ([NDAA](#)), which not only modernizes the military and provides the largest pay raise for our troops in eight years but also boosts investment in our military cybersecurity operations which includes the Cyber Command stationed in Battle Creek. Upton voted to hold Russia, Iran, and North Korea [accountable](#), supported the Administration's actions in [Syria](#), voted to approve measures in the U.S. House to address the threat of [North Korea](#), voted to advance major initiatives to [reform](#) the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and bipartisan [anti-human trafficking](#) legislation. Upton also supported the bipartisan hurricane [relief package](#). Upton also led the Michigan Congressional Delegation, along with Senators Stabenow and Peters, in [advocating](#) for the selection of Fort Custer as the preferred location for a potential ground-based missile defense system.

Upton was also proud to take part in local meeting and events with military and national security stakeholders such as greeting folks at the [Talons Out Honor Flight](#), speaking at the [Michigan Defense Center](#) breakfast, attending the instillation of the [49ers Michigan-Vietnam Memorial Wall](#) in South Haven, kicking off the St. Joseph/Benton Harbor Elks Lodge [veterans fishing outing](#), and more.

Protecting our Great Lakes and Environment

The beauty of our Great Lakes is unmatched. They are the envy of the world. But our Great Lakes face many challenges and it's more important than ever to work together in a bipartisan manner to ensure the health and beauty of these natural resources can be enjoyed for generations to come. In 2018, we must continue to work together with local, state, and national leaders to do just that.

At the start of the year, Upton urged [full funding](#) of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), a vital program critical to protecting and promoting the Great Lakes. Upton also hailed the release of the [Brandon Road Study](#) to combat invasive species such as Asian Carp, pushed a bipartisan amendment to keep [nuclear waste off](#) the Great Lakes, led the charge alongside U.S. Rep. Dan Kildee, D-Michigan, to prevent the closure of the Great Lakes Environmental Protection Agency ([EPA](#)) [office](#), and called for an [immediate cleanup](#) of a chemical spill that occurred on the shores of Lake Michigan. Further, Upton was a leader on common-sense solutions to problems associated with the Line 5 pipeline, which runs under the Straits of Mackinac. He [met with Enbridge](#) officials and worked with the State of Michigan on [increased safeguards](#) for the pipeline.

Upton was also proud to take part in local meetings and events to promote and protect the Great Lakes such as meeting with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Great Lakes Fisheries Commission members to discuss their work to prevent invasive species such as [Sea Lampreys](#) from wreaking havoc in the Great Lakes, and met personally with [Enbridge officials](#) to express deep concern about a lack of transparency about the condition of the Line 5 pipeline.

Tax Relief and Reform

Plain and simple: our tax code hasn't been updated since 1986 and is a broken, complicated mess. It costs folks too much time and money, and incentivizes businesses to move profits and jobs overseas. Enacting common-sense, pro-growth tax relief and reform is something I've spoken

about for years now and we finally took action and enacted historic tax reform this year. Finally. In 2018, we will continue to examine ways to improve our tax code to deliver more jobs and increase paychecks.

Upton, who has long-supported tax reform, was joined by [local economic development](#) officials in praising efforts to enact tax reform. Then in December, he was one of nine U.S. House lawmakers named to the [House-Senate Conference Committee](#) to iron out differences between the House and Senate bills. In late December, Upton voted to [advance](#) tax reform and hailed the passage of the landmark legislation – now law.

Upton was also proud to take part in local events to promote pro-growth tax reform such as co-hosting a roundtable in Kalamazoo with [local business leaders](#), and released a [video](#) with Michigan Congressional Delegation members to highlight the benefits of reforming the tax code.

Combating the Opioid Epidemic

The opioid epidemic is personal to me, as it is to many in Southwest Michigan, and across the country. It, sadly, has torn through families, neighborhoods and communities everywhere. In the last few years I have been meeting with first responders, crisis center employees, advocacy groups, and individuals suffering from the effects of addiction, whether it is themselves or from the fallout from family or friends. All these folks have said the same thing: the death toll is rising. This is why we can no longer be silent. In 2018, we must continue working in a bipartisan manner to fund the fight against the opioid epidemic at the local and state level.

Upton began the year by announcing that [“help is on the way”](#) in the opioid epidemic fight with federal grants, made as part of his landmark 21st Century Cures Act, were on their way to states. Michigan alone was on the receiving end of more than \$16 million in this first round of grant funding. Additionally, as President Trump declared a nationwide [public health emergency](#), Upton was part of White House meetings and Congress continued to examine the issue as Upton participated in a full Energy and Commerce Committee [hearing](#) and applauded the creation of a [new commission](#) to battle the epidemic.

Upton was also proud to take part in local events to curb the epidemic and raise awareness such as meeting with Cass County [law enforcement](#), headlining a [panel discussion](#) at the Western Michigan University Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine, releasing a public service announcement on the Drug Enforcement Agency’s National Prescription [Drug Take Back Day](#), and speaking at the Kalamazoo County Substance Abuse Task Force [Youth Summit](#). Learn more about Upton’s work on this critical issue [here](#).

Common-Sense Immigration Reforms

I have long supported comprehensive, common-sense immigration reform. Without a doubt, the number one issue for our Southwest Michigan farmers is immigration reform. But it affects many other facets of our economy as well from health care to education. Of great importance to me is protecting Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipient – individuals brought to our country through no fault of their own. This is an issue I care about a great deal. In 2018, finding a solution for these DACA recipients will continue to be one of my highest priorities.

Upton helped lead the charge to provide permanent relief for DACA recipients by co-sponsoring the *Bar Removal of Individuals who Dream and Grow our Economy Act* ([BRIDGE Act](#)) which seeks to grant a three-year protection for those who are covered by DACA, and the *Recognizing America's Children Act* ([RAC Act](#)), which would offer conditional five-year protection for DACA recipients if they pursue vocational or higher education, enlist in the military, or are gainfully employed. Upton is also part of the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus, which is working to produce new legislation that combines protections for DACA recipients with border security measures to rally significant support among both Republicans and Democrats.

Upton was also proud to take part in local events that championed common-sense immigration and refugee policies such as visiting a migrant [head start](#) center and the Bethany Christian Services [Refugee Center](#), and meetings with [constituents](#) in St. Joseph and Kalamazoo about immigration policies.

“All-of-the-Above” Energy Policies

When we pursue an “All-of-the-above” energy policies, prices stay low for Michigan families and businesses. Solar, wind, hydropower, as well as traditional energy solutions such as safe nuclear, coal, oil, and natural gas must all be in the mix. As Chairman of the Subcommittee on Energy, I remain committed to developing bipartisan policies that foster job growth and ensures a reliable and affordable energy supply. In 2018, we must continue to build the infrastructure needed to move these supplies to consumers and we must continue to work together to advance bipartisan solutions that ensure all Americans have safe, reliable, and affordable energy at their fingertips.

As Chairman of the [Subcommittee on Energy](#), Upton led the push on the [Powering America](#) series, an innovative exploration of American electricity markets, generation, distribution, consumption, and the resiliency of the electric grid. The Subcommittee held nine bipartisan hearings to engage with stakeholders to find out how we can provide greater value to American consumers now and in the future. The U.S. House also advanced Upton’s bipartisan [energy security](#) legislation that was championed by stakeholders such as Michigan Agency for Energy [Executive Director Valerie Brader](#) and also advanced numerous bipartisan [energy bills](#). Upton also visited Puerto Rico as part of a bipartisan fact-finding mission to see first-hand the devastation brought on by deadly hurricanes and how Congress could act to fix broken energy infrastructure.

Upton was also proud to take part in local events that championed an “All-of-the-above” energy strategy such as touring the [new Midwest Energy](#) facility in Cassopolis, and applauding the [decision to keep Palisades open](#).

Education

Not much is more important than a quality education. I have long been committed to improving our education system and believe that well-educated communities equal a stronger and more stable economy. A proper education is necessary for success in today’s world and we worked hard in 2017 to advance common-sense policies that gives students, parents, and teachers more opportunities to achieve their goals. In 2018, we will continue our focus on K-12 education, career

and technical education, and ensuring that higher education remains affordable and achievable for all who are interested.

Upton voted to reauthorize the bipartisan [*Carl D. Perkins Act*](#), which improves innovative career and technical educational opportunities. This legislation will help Americans develop the skills they need to compete for the high-skill, in-demand jobs of the future. Long an advocate for the FIRST Robotics educational program, Upton again introduced [*bipartisan legislation*](#) to champion Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) education. Upton also voted to advance a veteran college aide [*expansion program*](#), and co-sponsored bipartisan legislation, the [*College Transparency Act*](#), that would address the current shortcomings of higher education information.

Upton was also proud to participate in local events that promoted educational opportunities such as the Glen Oaks Community College residence hall [*groundbreaking*](#), the swearing of in of Dr. Edward Montgomery as the [*new president*](#) of Western Michigan University, and visiting [*schools across the Sixth District*](#) including the [*Hull 21st Century*](#) after-school program in Benton Harbor.

Conclusion

*Thanks for reading – as you can see from this report it was a busy year working hard for Southwest Michigan. Working together, 2018 should shape up to be even more productive as we tackle new issues. As always, you can learn more about my work on my [*website*](#), or on my social media accounts: [*Facebook*](#), [*Instagram*](#), and [*Twitter*](#). And you can sign up for my weekly email updates [*here*](#).*